

April 1, 2024

# **Up to \$10k Available in Grant Funding for Expanding Meal Access in Target Counties**

Application Deadline: May 13

Expanding access to nutritious meals and snacks in every Georgia county is an ongoing goal for Nutrition Services. Unfortunately during fiscal year 2023, 59 counties did not have a Happy Helpings meal site. In an effort to increase meal access and to feed more children this summer, DECAL is offering start-up grants.

New and experienced sponsors are eligible for up to \$10,000 in funding for establishing additional Happy Helping meal sites in targeted areas with high rates of childhood food insecurity.

To qualify, sponsors must submit an application by Monday, May 13, 2024. Click here to apply.

#### What we are looking for:

DECAL Nutrition is seeking partners to increase access to meals and snacks in targeted areas with high rates of childhood food insecurity during summer 2024. These counties include:



#### **Project Specifications:**

Each project will have a budget of up to \$10,000 for the period of June-August 2024. Please use the following items as references for the allowability of activities:

#### **Allocating Cost in Child Nutrition Programs**

#### **Requirements:**

- Must be an approved experienced Happy Helpings sponsor in good standing or an approved new sponsor prior to receiving funds. Payments will be issued once the sponsor has been approved to operate for FY24 but no later than June 28, 2024.
- Must sign a grant agreement amendment with DECAL.

- Must agree to operate a Happy Helpings meal site in one or more of the targeted counties. Failure to serve meals in at least one of the designated counties during FY24 will result in returning the funds to DECAL.
- Must use grant funds on allowable Happy Helpings' costs.
- Must submit meal claims within 30 days.
- Must submit the Happy Helpings start-up grant application by 11:59 p.m. on May 13, 2024. Start-up grant applications will be evaluated using a point-scoring system. The higher number of points will result in a larger award amount.
- Must have the ability to share project outcomes including how funds were used along with photos by September 30, 2024.

#### **Grant Timeline:**

Date	
March 19	Grant Information Call
May 13	Grant Application Due
May 31	Grant Awards Finalized
June 3	Grant Awards Announced
June 17	Amendments Signed
June 28*	Grant Funding Issued
September 30	Project Outcomes Due

<sup>\*</sup>Payments will be made once your organization is approved to operate in 2024.

# **Guidance for Rural Non-Congregate Meal Sites**

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (P.L. 117-328), established a permanent non-congregate meal service option for rural areas with no congregate meal service available through the Summer Meals Programs to include the SFSP.

On December 29, 2023, USDA FNS issued Interim Final Rule: Establishing the Summer EBT Program and Rural Non-Congregate Option in the Summer Meal Programs.

The interim final rule (IFR) amended the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and the National School Lunch Program's Seamless Summer Option (SSO) regulations to codify the flexibility for rural program operators to provide non-congregate meal service in the SFSP and SSO, collectively referred to as the summer meal programs.

The following DECAL memoranda have been revised or newly developed as a result of the recent IFR:

- Rural Non-Congregate Meal Services in the Summer Food Service Program: This memorandum was revised to provide additional guidance and clarity on non-congregate meal service flexibilities that are available for SFSP sites in rural areas that do not have congregate meal services.
- Meal Service Requirements in the Summer Meal Program, with Questions and Answers (Revised): This memorandum provides guidance on meal service requirements in the SFSP and has been revised to conform to current SFSP regulations regarding meal service time requirements for rural non-congregate SFSP sites.
- Restricting the Number of Meal/Snack Services or Number of Meal/Snacks Sponsors Can Serve in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP): This memorandum was revised to include changes to meal service requirements for rural non-congregate SFSP sites.
- Policy #16 Monitoring Requirements of Sponsors Participating in the Summer Food Service Program: This policy provides guidance on monitoring

- requirements of sponsors participating in the SFSP and was revised to include information regarding monitoring rural non-congregate sites.
- Policy #5 Recordkeeping Requirements for All Sponsors and Sponsored Facilities Participating in the SFSP: This policy provides guidance on recordkeeping requirements in the SFSP and includes requirements particular to rural non-congregate meals.
- New! Charging for SFSP Meals at Camps and Conditional Non-Congregate Sites: This is a new memorandum that provides guidance to sponsors of camps and conditional non-congregate SFSP sites on the option to charge SFSP meals to non-Program eligible children.

USDA issued the following new and revised memoranda regarding rural non-congregate meals:

- Non-Congregate Meal Service in Rural Areas Questions and Answers
- Interim Final Rule: State Agency Monitoring in the Summer Food Service Program
- Rural Designations in the Summer Meal Programs Revised
- Implementation Guidance for the Rural Non-Congregate Option Provisions of the Interim Final Rule, *Establishing the Summer EBT Program and Rural Non-Congregate Option in the Summer Meals Programs*

#### **Application Guidance for Rural Non-Congregate Meals**

Nutrition Services has developed guidance for SFSP Sponsors on the rural non-congregate application and approval process. The guidance, Rural Non-Congregate Option Application and Instruction Guide can be found here.

For questions regarding the memoranda and policies, please contact Robyn Parham.

# USDA Requests Input on Serious Deficiency Process

Deadline to respond: May 21

On February 21, 2024, USDA published the Proposed Rule entitled "Serious Deficiency Process in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). The proposed rule can be viewed here.

This rulemaking proposes important modifications to make the application of serious deficiency procedures in the CACFP and SFSP consistent, effective, and in line with current requirements under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act.

USDA proposes to add clarity to the serious deficiency process by defining key terms, establishing a timeline for full correction, and establishing criteria for determining when the serious deficiency process must be implemented.

This rulemaking will also address termination for cause and disqualification, implementation of legal requirements for records maintained on individuals on the National Disqualified List, and participation of multi-state sponsoring organizations.

Happy Helpings sponsors may offer written comments on the proposed rulemaking on or before May 21, 2024. For further information on submitting written comments please click here.

# BOLD, Boys & Girls Club of Greater Augusta and Burke County Public Schools recognized as Turnip the Beet Award Winners



Bread of Life Development (BOLD) Ministries, Boys & Girls Club of Greater Augusta, and Burke County Public Schools were recently awarded USDA Turnip the Beet Award for Summer 2023.

This award recognizes outstanding summer meal program sponsors across the nation who work hard to offer high quality meals to children that are appetizing, appealing, and nutritious during the summer months. This award also recognizes sponsors that go above and beyond program requirements.

**BOLD Ministries** was awarded the gold award. Last summer, DECAL attended a Happy Helpings spike event hosted by BOLD Ministries in Conyers. Children engaged in multiple physical activities, enjoyed a nutritious taste test station featuring fresh produce, and an assortment of flavored water at a hydration station. Executive Director Barbara Muse said, "We offered cooking and nutrition classes during the summer, installed a garden, and included the children in assembling their snacks to make learning about nutrition and food fun."

**Boys & Girls Club of Greater Augusta** was awarded the silver award. When asked how nutritious foods are incorporated into menus and promoted to children at their summer site, Food Program Coordinator Susan Robertson shared, "I always include whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. I try to stick with our summer weekly themes. During International Week, we served food from different cultures such as Greek salad and spaghetti, and Health Week included grilled chicken salad. It is also important to plate the food, so it is appealing."

**Burke County Public Schools** was awarded the bronze award. Nutrition Director Allison Lairscy said, "We send out a menu for the week that lists all the components of the meals. On the back side of the menu, we include nutrition education. We send out tips for cutting and storing the fruits and veggies and [provide] recipes."

All summer meal sponsors in good standing may be eligible for a Turnip the Beet Award. Sponsors may self-nominate or be nominated by another party. Nomination forms for FY24 will be available at the end of the summer season.

# **Budget Representative Assignments Updated**

Assignments for the Budget team have been updated. Pleae make sure you are familiar with your budget representative for the upcoming summer season.

Budget Representative	Institution Assignment	Email	Phone Number
Kristy Lanier	o (zero) - M Excluding Combo Sponsors	Kristy.Lanier@decal.ga.gov	(770) 359-4401
Gwendolyn Howard	N-Z All Combo Sponsors	Gwendolyn.Howard@decal.ga.gov	(404) 651-7191

For all budget inquiries, please email nutrition.budget@decal.ga.gov.

### **Summer 2024 is Almost Here**

### Start Planning Now

Providing summer meals is a year-round effort. At any point throughout the year, there are things you can do to prepare for this summer!

Here's a guide for 2024:

#### **April**

- Review sites and ensure you are aware of their locations, operational hours, staff, and dates for monitoring.
- Think about how meals will be delivered to the sites, and how many will be served.
- Complete pre-operational site visits.
- Ensure administrative staff are trained. Finish application and renewal forms.
- Contract with a food service management company, if necessary.
- Check with DECAL to determine if there are any potential sites lacking sponsors or areas lacking sites and sponsors and consider extending service to those areas.

### **Tips for Completing the Application:**

- To minimize confusion and delays, only the program contact and/or authorized representative should be contacting the application reviewer. Keep in mind that the program contact is responsible for entering the information in the online application, GA ATLAS.
- Complete all forms in its entirety.
- The Food Service Permit Inquiry Form needs to be submitted/signed in every county where meals are being served prior to being submitted to DECAL.
- If utilizing a FSMC or acting as a FSMC, ensure that numbers 42 & 43 are responded to correctly on the institution application.

#### **Board of Directors Section:**

- Ensure that all sections are completed for each board member.
- Any changes made to the Board of Directors (BOD) need to be supported with board meeting minutes.
- Ensure that the "delegation of authority" form is signed by an officer of the board (as defined on the form).

#### **Management Plan:**

- The plan should be updated annually.
- The percentage of time allocated to Happy Helpings for personnel/staffing should align with the allocation on the staff distribution report.

#### **Site Application:**

- Site changes, including add-a-sites, need to be approved prior to making changes to an approved budget.
- If seeking approval to serve non-congregate meals for excessive heat, please ensure to submit the demonstration project request form for non-congregate feeding.
- Ensure to indicate days that the site will not serve meals during normal operating dates on #14.
- If site is outdoors (park, driveway, pool), please detail the plan if indicating that meals will be served indoors when answering #28.

#### **Maximum Meal Count (MMC):**

- The threshold for the maximum number of meals that can be served is 100.
- Sponsors that request a MMC over the threshold prior to the initial approval of the site application must submit written justification to their assigned Application Specialist explaining why an increase is needed.
- Enrollment/registration information should be submitted to justify the increase for sites that are closed enrolled.
- Letters of authorization for sites located at unaffiliated schools and/or unaffiliated apartment communities can include information to justify the increase.

- A justification letter is not required for sites requesting the same MMC over the threshold that was approved the previous year. Additionally, if the request is over the MMC threshold, but under the approved MMC that was approved the previous year, no justification letter is required.
- If a request appears unreasonable/unsupported, then the MMC over 100 will not be approved.
- Sponsors that begin operations and later request a MMC over the threshold must submit written justification to their assigned Business Operations Specialist explaining why the increase is needed. Additionally, three consecutive days of daily meal count (DMC) forms must be submitted. If the request is unsupported, the MMC to provide more than 100 meals will not be approved.

#### **Budget:**

- Excess Funds: Ensure that the form is completed/submitted with supporting documentation. Before a request can be approved, the prior year's reconciliation form must be acceptable and reconciled.
- **Related Party:** Please ensure to submit the related party disclosure form and ensure that all applicable categories are checked in the budget questions and assertions section.

### **Resources to Promote Meal Sites**

Ensuring families and guardians are aware of the availability of meals in their area is an important part of the Happy Helpings program. Nutrition Services has created several promotional resources to help sponsors gain exposure for meal sites this summer.

The following resources are available to sponsors:

- Editable flyer
- Editable Poster
- Social Media Graphics
- Vehicle Magnet\*

\*To produce a vehicle magnet, print the artwork and take it to any sign company.





To locate these resources, visit the **Nutrition Page** on **Decal.ga.gov** and locate "Happy Helpings Participant Information" on the menu. Expand the menu and scroll to "Posters and Flyers." Click on the link and it will take you to a password protected section. The password is "Flyer."

If you have questions, please contact Cindy. Kicklighter@decal.ga.gov

# **Unanticipated School Closure Waivers Available**

On August 30, 2023, Nutrition Services received USDA approval for statewide waivers for Happy Helpings sponsors to utilize during unanticipated school closures.

The following waivers are available during unanticipated school closures when meal service operations are limited due to natural disasters, unscheduled major building repairs, court orders relating to school safety or other issues, labor-management disputes, or when approved by the State agency for similar unanticipated causes.

The following approved waivers are available when schools are closed with no virtual learning:

- Non-Congregate Meal Service
- Parent and Guardian Meal Pick-up
- Meal Service Times
- Service of Meals at School Sites

The waivers listed above are available through June 30, 2024. To read more, clickhere.

### **Upcoming Training Dates**

April 10-11, 2024 Happy Helpings New Sponsor Training (Atlanta) 9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

All non-experienced Happy Helpings sponsors are required to attend a two-day in-person new sponsor training.

April 15, 2024 Memo Monday! 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Are you familiar with the updated guidance on the Happy Helpings SFSP meal service and cost requirements?

Join this webinar to learn the latest information in the following memos:

- Meal Service Requirements in the Summer Meal Programs, with Questions and Answers (Revised) 1.31.2024
- Meal Disallowances for the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) October 30, 2023
- Cost Disallowance in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) November 1, 2023

April 16, 2024 Happy Helpings Budget Readiness 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Do you have the budget basics?

Join this webinar to learn:

- the purpose of the budget package,
- the purpose of all budget line items in GA ATLAS, and
- how to prepare & develop a complete GA ATLAS budget package.

April 18, 2024 Procurement Supporting Documents & Resources 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Each year, program operators are tasked with calculating the food cost for the fiscal year and selecting the appropriate procurement method(s) to support the food cost.

Join this webinar to learn ways to:

- distinguish the standard procurement methods with each procurement threshold,
- complete or create a Procurement Policy, and
- understand the required procurement documents to complete and submit to support the food cost.

May 20, 2024 *Memo Monday!* 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Are you familiar with the new food items that may be served in Child Nutrition Programs?

Join this webinar to learn the latest information in the following memos:

- Crediting Tofu and Soy Yogurt Products in the School Meals Programs, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and Summer Food Service Program -Revised November 29, 2023
- Crediting Traditional Indigenous Foods in Child Nutrition Programs November 2, 2023

Please click here to register for all DECAL webinars listed above.

#### **Registration:** This is a **two-step** process:

- Step 1:
  - After registering in GA ATLAS, you will receive a Training Confirmation email *immediately* from Georgia DECAL Help Desk
    - helpdesk@cnpus.com with a registration link to attend the webinar(check your spam/junk folder).
- Step 2:
  - You must then register for the training using the link provided on the Training confirmation email.
  - If you should have an issue with registering, please contact Leslie Truman **prior** to the day of training.
  - Click here if you need a refresher on how to register for training in GA ATLAS.

Please note: Only the Program Contact (PC) can self-register within GA ATLAS. If an additional person will be attending, please contact Leslie Truman, Administrative Assistant, at (404) 657-1779 for assistance.

### **Training Resources**

#### In Case You Missed It: Webinar Recordings Now Available!

If you missed a webinar, please visit the **Training and Technical Assistance** webpage for previously recorded webinars. This month's training highlight is the **February Memo Monday** webinar. It discussed unused reimbursement in SFSP, best practices for managing unused reimbursement in SFSP and simplified cost accounting principles.

#### **Health Benefits of Whole Grains**

Whole grains are great for your heart health and are packed with essential nutrients, fiber and antioxidants that are important for overall health and wellness. Our partners at the Home Baking Association shareda few of the many health benefits of consuming whole grains and how to include themin your meal planning.



### **Nutrition Ed Nook**

*Legumes: Vegetable or Protein?* 

Legumes are the April Harvest of the Month (English and Spanish) spotlight. Legumes are a nutritious staple of diets around the world. They are an inexpensive source of protein, vitamins, complex carbohydrates, and fiber.

Along with being a highly nutritious food, evidence shows that legumes can play an important role in the prevention and management of many different health conditions.

Legumes have a similar nutrient profile to foods in both the protein foods group*and* the vegetable group and can be considered either a vegetable or a protein food. Legumes are a class of plants that include beans, peas, and lentils.

**Beans** are a versatile food that can be used in many ways. They are filled with protein, fiber and vitamins and minerals like folate and iron. Beans are an excellent staple ingredient to add to any pantry and they provide a splash of color, flavor, and texture to all types of meals. Examples include kidney beans, pinto beans, white beans, black beans, lima beans, fava beans, and soy beans.

**Peas** are a good source of vitamins A and C. Fresh peas are extremely versatile, pairing well with many vegetables and herbs, as well as rice, beans, grains, cheese and more. Examples include chickpeas, black-eyed peas, pigeon peas, split peas, green peas, snow peas, and sugar snap peas.

**Lentils** are highly versatile. They have a rich, earthy texture and will give any dish a boost of fiber and nutrients. They can add thickness and bulk to a recipe. They are an excellent source of protein and dietary fiber. Types include black, brown, green, orange, red and yellow lentils.

#### **Integration:**

- Red Bean Curry
- Bean Patties
- Chickpea Salad Sandwich
- Roasted Zesty Chickpeas
- Lentil Plantballs
- Lentil Soup

#### **Education:**

**Watch** the **Learn About Legumes with Kids Storybook Cottage** video with your program participants. *Jump into 'Bean Bonanza*' at Kids Storybook Cottage, where we unravel the exciting world of legumes and beans! From the plump Chickpeas to the colorful Kidney Beans, and the tiny Lentils to the creamy Soybeans, each episode is a fun-filled educational experience. Have participants repeat the name of each legume in the video.

**Do a legume exploration** with beans, peas and/or lentils (i.e., kidney beans vs red beans, or lima beans vs black-eyed peas) using your five senses to describe how they look, feel, taste, sound, and smell.

**Read Auntie Yang's Great Soybean Picnic** by Ginnie Lo with program participants. Jinyi and her sister love visiting Auntie and Uncle Yang's home, where they enjoy dumplingeating contests and backyard adventures with their cousins. One weekend, on a Sunday drive among the cornfields near Chicago, Jinyi and her family discover a soybean field, which begins a tradition that becomes a staple of the Chinese American community in the Midwest.

*Talk* with families about how participants can help with meal preparation such finding and removing small rocks or other seeds and plant parts from dried beans and lentils. **Bonus:** Send recipes home with families for them to incorporate legumes into their meals!

#### Conversation:

- Have your program participants eaten legumes before?
- Which legume is their favorite (beans, peas, or lentils)?
- What different legume would they like to try?

Share your Harvest of the Month stories and menu integration of legumes with Nutrition Education Specialist, Morgan Chapman, MPH, MCHc at morgan.chapman@decal.ga.gov.

# **Physical Activity Corner**

Spring into Action with Physical Activity

Spring is here – the perfect time of year to start fresh and keep moving. It's almost time to bring out those



shorts, running shoes, bicycles, and get moving again after the cold winter.

Whether it's planting a garden, going for a run, or taking a walk around your neighborhood, there are plenty of activities to keep everyone moving and active outside this spring season. Simply moving and sitting less helps build the momentum of our bodies to move forward.

This may include walking, running, jogging, visiting the gym, yoga, kickboxing, or dancing. Be sure to be mindful of drinking water while being active, especially as we shift into the warmer months.

Staying active contributes to a healthy lifestyle that decreases risk of chronic diseases, enhances mental health, and improves overall wellbeing. How will you get active?

### **Integration:**

- Explore Georgia in Spring
- CDC Eight (8) Strategies for a Healthy Spring
- Spring Movement Activities for Young Children

#### **Education:**

Read out loud, "The Tiny Seed," by Eric Carle.

Watch the video on Spring Dance! by Jack Hartmann.

**Talk** with families about ways to spring into action with fitness at home, in their community, child care centers and adult day centers. **Bonus**: Share **#KeepItMoving**, **#SpringIntoAction**, **#HealthyLifestyle**, and **#SpringFitness** pictures and events that are happening in your communities.

#### **Conversation:**

- What is your favorite spring physical activities?
- How do you spring into action after a cold winter?
- Why is spring the best season to get outdoors and exercise?
- Why is it important to keep moving daily?
- What are the keys to a healthy lifestyle?

Share your **#DECALPhysicalActivity**, **#SpringFitness**, **#SpringIntoAction**, **#HealthyLifestyle**, and **#KeepItMoving** stories and pictures with Physical Activity Specialist, Tina McLaren at **tina.mclaren@decal.ga.gov**.

### **Eat Healthy and Live Active**

Georgia Early Care and Education Harvest of the Month 23-24 Calendar

Harvest of the Month (HOTM) is the Georgia Department of Education School Nutrition Program's farm to school initiative that highlights an item each month that can be sourced locally and served in Georgia's school meals.

The Georgia Early Care and Education Harvest of the Month is a collaborative campaign to promote a different local, seasonal fruit or vegetable in child care settings each month.

Visit the Georgia Department of Education's HOTM **webpage** and Quality Care for Children **webpage**. Upon viewing, you can find tips and tricks for preparing produce items, curriculum connections, activity lists and book alignment for your early care classrooms.



### **Dates to Remember**

DATE	EVENTS	
April	Harvest of the Month: Legumes	
April 10-11	Happy Helpings New Sponsor Training (Atlanta)	
April 15	Memo Monday	
April 16	Happy Helpings Budget Readiness Webinar	
April 18 (zero)	Procurement Supporting Documents & Resources Webinar	
May	Harvest of the Month: Berries	
May 13 All Com	Happy Helpings Start Up Grants application due	
May 20	Memo Monday	
May 21	Written comments on the USDA Proposed Rule on the Serious Deficiency Process in the CACFP and SFSP due	

### **Happy Helpings Resources:**

The following documents were covered in previous newsletters:

- Identifying the Difference between Pre-Award Cost Request vs. Excess Funds
- Make your Local Farmers Market a Meal Site Option
- FY24 Reimbursement Rates Released
- Increasing Access to Food Through Mobile Feeding
- Check your Email Messages in GA ATLAS

# **How was my Customer Service?**

### Provide feedback on your experience with the Nutrition Team



Click on the icon on the right to participate in the customer service survey. Responses are anonymous.

### **NEW DECAL Download**

Early Childhood Educators of the Year



In December, DECAL and the Georgia Foundation for Early Care and Learning announced our three winners for Georgia's Early Childhood Educators of the Year for the 2023-2024 school year.

In its second year, the program recognizes outstanding early education teachers of children ages birth to preschool. There are three categories, infant, toddler, and preschool. It goes along with our Georgia's

Pre-K Program Teachers of the Year who are also recognized annually.

On this episode of DECAL Download, we are joined by our current Early Childhood Educators of the year, Noel Weimer from Water Oak Family Child Care Learning Home in Roswell, Bianca Brown from the Greenbriar School in Evans and Chantelle Hester from Smart Starters Academy Family Child Care Learning Home in Savannah.

We are also joined by Laura Wagner, the Executive Director for the Georgia Foundation for Early Care and Learning and Miranda Murphy who is our Practice and Support Service Outreach and Project Manager.

Listen to the episode here.



# Nutrition Division Marketing & Outreach Team

Cindy Kicklighter Carl Glover

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

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